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Season's Greetings

A cute Elf on the Shelf peeks through the glow of a Christmas tree. Check inside this edition to see what the other elves in Haliburton County are getting up to! /submitted

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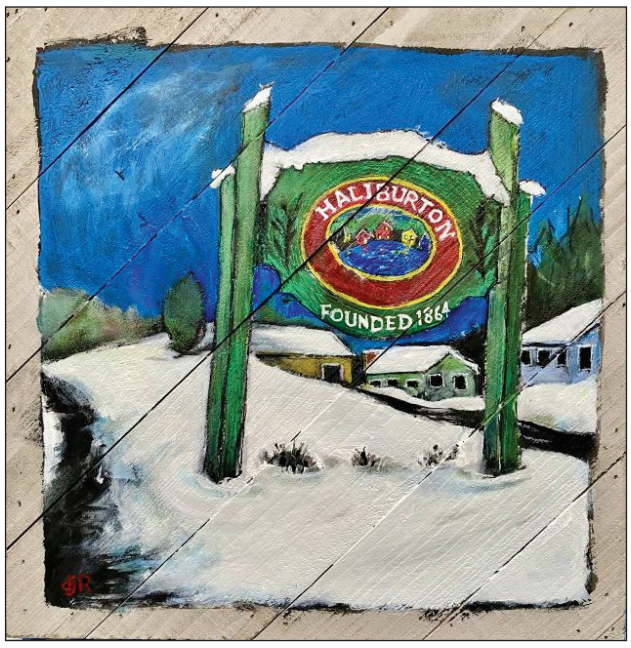
DEC. 25....CLOSED

DEC. 31....7 AM - 5 PM
JAN. 1.....CLOSED

DEC. 26....9 AM - 5 PM
DEC. 27-30....7 AM-9PM

TODD'S independent YOUR INDEPENDENT GROCER



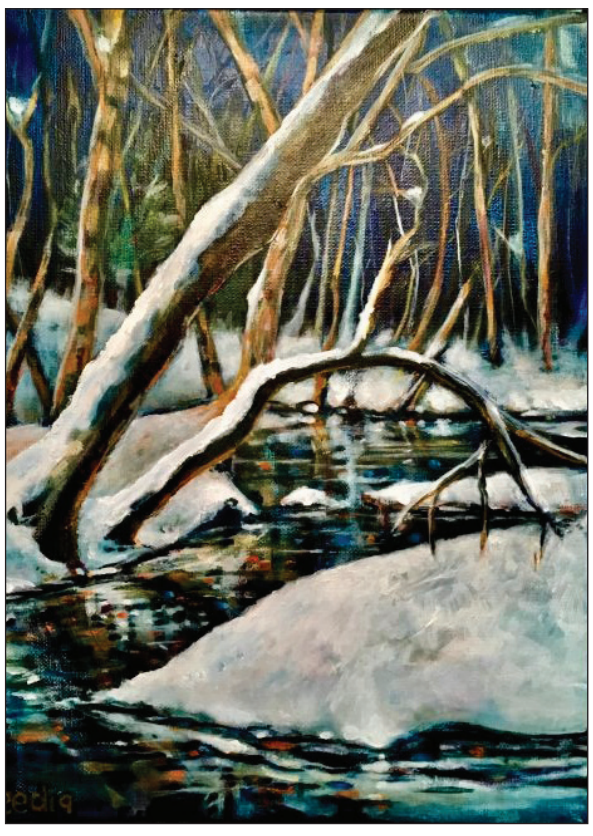
Cobalt blue

A Window Song

Second fierce December blizzard
Pauses time with blur and dread
Rather than attack with shovel
I will wait inside instead
Much removed from what's familiar
Housebound rather than outside
Breathing what the furnace sends me
Not the air the trees provide
Wanting neither scarf for choking
Nor two mitts or boots upon
Earth, which once my toes loved madly
Into socks they're now withdrawn
I don't need to suffer meekly
From my indoor window view
I'll pretend it frames a canvas
Celebrating cobalt blue
Since a million clots of snowflake
Perch like cotton on each bough

DEB REED
Wind in the Attic

I get swept by Group of Seven
Who, with white, could cold endow
Harris, Jackson, Varley, Lismer
Casson, and the others who
Like their bashful icon, Thomson
Squeezed bent tubes of oil into
Dreamlands where this province sparkles
Ancient Shield in angel light
So through glass, my eye comparing
Lets these flakes stir appetite
I don't need to suffer meekly
From my indoor window view
I'll pretend it frames a canvas
Celebrating cobalt blue
Though the clouds are slow and silent
I hear Lightfoot, Joni, too
I'll pretend I'm filling canvas
Like a painter passing through



SEASON'S GREETINGS

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Barry & Kendra and the families of Blair Sand and Gravel

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CountyLife

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All inserts are to selected distribution areas.

For information on how your flyer can be inserted each week in County Life please contact Melissa Armstrong at **613-332-2002** or **melissa@haliburtonpress.com**

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Canada is Christmas

IRV HANDLER
Special to *County Life*

The world seems to change at Christmas. Despite feeling more harried, people tend to be kinder and more considerate at Christmas. Strangers greet each other warmly with a hearty Merry Christmas or the more generic, Happy Holidays. The average person buys presents for nice folks who service them throughout the year; their barber, housekeeper and mail delivery person (for those of us who still get any mail). Bosses take their employees out to dinner. Employees buy the boss a bottle of wine.

People are nicer around Christmas time. They care more about the world around them. They care that people have enough to eat. They care that every child has a toy to play with. They care that people have someone to share their meals with. For many people this is a personal mission so, not only do they contribute money to their favourite charities but they also roll up their sleeves and volunteer to distribute food and toys, visit the sick and elderly and perform other good deeds. I did not grow up celebrating Christmas but I have been the recipient of this type of generosity many times with an invitation to what was called an Orphans and Jews Christmas dinner.

The themes of Peace on Earth, Goodwill towards Men (which should be taken as including both men and women) extend to the international stage with the many wars and hostiles raging around the world declaring a ceasefire over Christmas. But while the Christmas spirit is not solely a Canadian phenomenon, I have come to believe that Christmas values are, in fact, Canadian values.

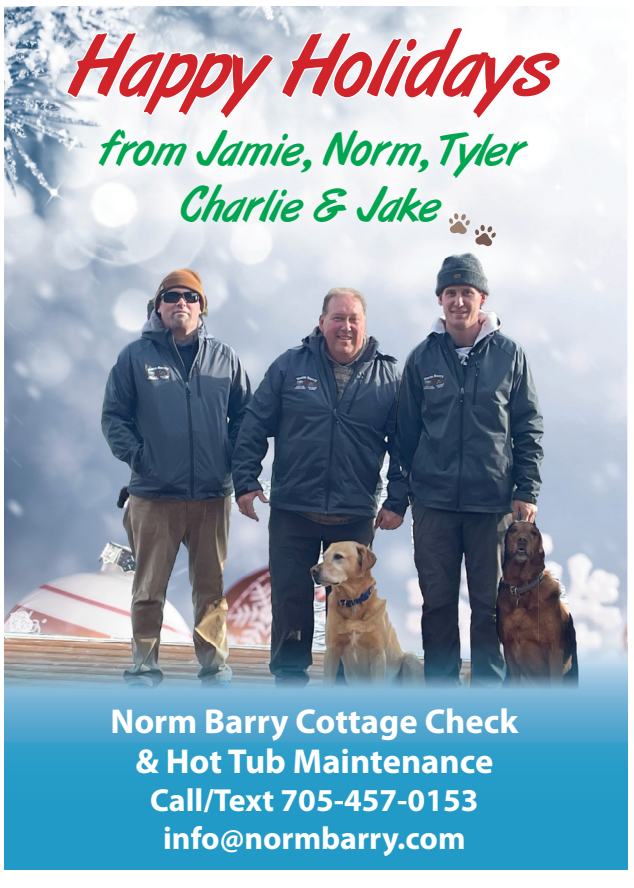
Canada had a tough year in 2025. The downstairs neighbours started acting up with an unprovoked trade war and thinly veiled threats of annexation. Proudly, Canadians responded as we have always responded, by pulling together to make sure every citizen is being well cared for. Canada went on a national "Elbows Up" campaign of buying Canadian goods and services and vacationing in our own country (or at least trying to avoid the crazy downstairs neighbours). The CBC reported that Canadian summer tourism from May to August increased by 6 per cent to a record $59 billion. At the same time Canadian trips to the United States decreased by almost 30 per cent. While it is more difficult to measure how much Canadians have increased their purchase of Canadian goods, surveys indicate that 80 per cent of Canadian households are attempting to buy more Canadian made goods. I realize that schadenfreude (getting pleasure from the misfortune of others) is not in the Christmas spirit, but it does feel satisfying that the US bourbon industry suffered a $5 billion loss this year.

Canada's response goes beyond Elbows Up. Our government is providing industry support for affected businesses while supporting workers with improvements to the Employment Insurance program and increased funding for job training programs in impacted industries. I also found it especially gratifying that Canadians from across the country were able to put away their long-standing animosity towards Toronto to cheer on the Blue Jays during their heroic World Series run. (Go Jays!)

The threat of becoming the 51st state seems highly remote, in part because, while we share a common border, language, economy and history, Canadian values are not American values. Canadians are renowned around the world for being polite; Americans are known for being (to use a polite term) brash. In Canada we believe that everyone has the right to food, a safe place to live and health care. The United States is still trying to come to grips with these concepts. The United States was built on the concepts of Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. In Canada we are dedicated to the concepts of Peace, Order and Good Government. The American founding principal is inward looking focusing on the rights of the individual while Canada' s founding principal is outward looking focused on the rights of the collective body. In Canada we take care of ourselves by taking care of our neighbours. At least we try. I am not saying that Canada is perfect. We still have a lot of work to do, but we are trying.

So at Christmas time, as I see humanity become more compassionate to the plight of the underprivileged, it seems to me that the world becomes a little more Canadian. As they say, we all need a little Christmas but, now more than ever, the world can also use a little more Canada.

Merry Christmas, eh!



When the shoe is on the other hoof

STEVE GALEA
Beyond 35

I THINK we've all heard the phrase, "The hunter has become the hunted", but you never really appreciate what it means until it happens to you.

I found this out the other day, while I was minding my own business in the house. I happened to look out the dining room window towards our front lawn and saw a big, healthy doe standing about ten feet away. She looked right back at me, then turned her head towards the empty bird feeder, and then looked at me once again.

I'm not the most perceptive fellow, but it soon became very clear that this deer was more than a bit miffed that we hadn't filled up our winter bird feeder in a few days. To be clear, we stopped filling it after we discovered that it was attracting more deer and squirrels than birds.

This was something we did not want to do.

I found myself in a staring contest with that deer, which I lost. So, I quickly retreated to the kitchen to get a snack and make myself a cup of coffee. But, as soon as I looked up, there she was again. This time she was even closer and staring at me through the kitchen window. Once again, she alternated between looking at me and the bird feeder.

This was unsettling to say the least. For it appeared as if the deer had figured out my routine. It even knew the food source I was using.

After a minute or two, I retreated to my basement office and started to work when – and I swear this is true – I looked out my office window to see the deer standing about 15 feet away looking in at me.

I learned a couple of important things that morning. For one thing, deer are more aggressive than they let on. Also, good luck getting a restraining order on them.

That's a shame because the deer that live in this town apparently have no respect for our local by-laws, especially the ones that prohibit the feeding of deer.

In fact, it seems as if they enjoy playing fast and loose with the rules. When, for instance, is the last time you saw any of them using the cross walk or respecting a no-trespassing sign?

The message that my stalker deer tried to impart on me was crystal clear.

She might as well have just said, "Hey Steve, you wouldn't be breaking any deer feeding by-law by filling up a bird feeder (Wink. Wink.)" Followed by, "Nice shrubs you have around here. It'd be a shame if something happened to them … "

As if that is not intimidating enough, that doe showed up with three others later that day, just to show – I suppose – that she is not messing around. So, there we have it – roving gangs of deer intimidating tax-paying citizens who have no recourse since they have already filled their deer tags. It's a sad state of affairs really.

The thing is I will not be intimidated or bullied. I am a law-abiding citizen. Tonight, when that doe looks in the dining room window, she and her friends are going to see me wearing my hunting orange vest and hat while enjoying a nice venison stew.

And, if that doesn't work, I'll be filling the bird feeder up first thing tomorrow morning …

Elves around the County

Elf on the Shelf

Many families around Haliburton County (and beyond!) partake in an annual Elf on the Shelf tradition, where a curious elf visits their home for the month of December, and shares their observations with Santa Claus as Christmas approaches. Check out some of the merriment and mischief that a few local elves got into! All photos submitted.

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Send your letters to the editor to emily@haliburtonpress.com. Letters must be signed and include a phone number.

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Why now?

AS WE sit with our eggnog by the crackling fire, there is a sense of inner peace that floods the soul. It's a special time of year, there's no denying that.

A season of welcoming those who may not have warm homes to enter, a time where we put kindness on the forefront, and make that extra effort to spare some change when we can.

I've often wondered what it is about this time of year that brings out the best in people. While there are heightened emotions and wisps of nostalgia carried in on the wintery breeze, there doesn't seem to be one pinpointed reason for the shift in human behaviour.

EMILY STONEHOUSE
County Life Editor

Some may argue that the very roots of Christmas are founded in the early scribbles of Christianity; that if put to practice properly, the extensions of kindness are the efforts made to put Jesus' teachings of love, compassion, and justice on the table to pay tribute to his life and his messages.

Many others would say that the season has become diluted with Hallmark romances and carouseling Santa figures clad in velvet robes of red and white. And instead of the religious undertones that guide us towards kindness, it's the memories of days gone by that usher us to find the light.

There are bits and pieces of many holidays and traditions braided together to form what we see as Christmas now. Holly strung across the mantle is a pagan belief; thought to ward off evil and welcome brighter days beyond the winter solstice.

The story of the poinsettia has been pulled from a Mexican legend of a young girl who wished to give Jesus a gift, but had nothing more than a weed to offer. The scrap of a plant blossomed into the poinsettia, symbolizing the Star of Bethlehem.

Christmas trees combine a clash of cultures; pulling from both paganism and Christianity to represent evergreen for life, a belief to live eternally through hope and heart.

The upper-class Victorians embraced the holiday season unlike any other socioeconomic grouping to date. Many of the traditions we use today were rung in from the mid-1800s, including candles, trees, turkeys for dinner, and dried oranges. One of the social media trends right now is *A Little Women Christmas*, celebrating the simplicity of the season, before box stores and Amazon bombarded their way to the top of the naughty list.

And through it all, a sense of kindness, a pursuit of peace, a dedication to helping out thy neighbour, it seems to weave its way through each and every tradition and belief.

So, why now? Did Charles Dickens' famous story really imprint on so many souls? The belief that if we do not put others ahead of ourself, we will be doomed for eternity?

Do we perform out of guilt, out of fear, or out of the very pure goodness that must reside in our hearts; some buried in cavities deeper than others.

And I've often wondered, if we have shown we are capable of such goodness, can we not carry this into the rest of the year? Instead of turning the other way when someone is struggling, we look them in the eye, and offer a helping hand. Instead of taking one day to sit in that comfy space between nostalgia and hope, we carry that outlook into each day; a blessing each time the sun rises once again.

There are many factors, many beliefs, many outlooks that swirl and whirl together to form this version of Christmas we know today. And through it all, the common denominator is kindness.

So let us take a cup of kindness this holiday season. For ourselves, for our neighbours, for those we have never met, and make an effort to carry that magic forward into the dark days of winter ahead.

And in the famous words of Ebenezer Scrooge, *I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach!*

Top 10 gifts for the person who has everything

WITH THE holiday season here, we are all hoping to find just the right gift for the people we love. Some people are easy to shop for. Others are almost impossible. For instance, what do you get the person who has everything? Here are my top 10 suggestions.

STEVE GALEA
Humour Columnist

1. A book on the perils of hoarding.
2. Yet another storage unit.
3. An inventory program.
4. A cheaper version of one of the things they own.
5. Socks. You never have enough socks.
6. Something they absolutely hate, so they can experience what it is like to finally return an item.
7. Something really embarrassing, just to see if they already have one.
8. A grizzly bear – I bet they don't have that.
9. Something perishable, so you don't add to the problem.
10. Nothing. Apparently, they don't have any of that!

Angels

Wings, frozen in flight, white as Snow,
my shadow hovering over them, hunched against
the Wind that blows across this patch of park,
the willows' drooping tresses swaying like seaweed,
or a silent kind of music, maybe,
that isn't audible to ears,
growing louder this time each year, when winter
cloaks this corner of world in a quilt of quiet
and stillness,
and my Soul stops to listen to what my ears can't
hear, the pureness of the silence, blank as Snow,
feeling it flowing through me, as I stand here shivering in the cold, my shadow looming over the angel
somebody made in the Snow,
a stranger gifting another with a moment of gladness, stumbling unexpectedly across these wings,
outstretched in the Snow,
wondering what prompted the stranger to lay in the
bed of Snow and create this memory of childhood
for other strangers to find,
the feeling of flopping backwards into pillows of
Snow, my best friend at my side,
giggling as we flapped our arms that sprouted
wings, the brooms of our legs, sweeping Snow,
beaming at the gleam in each other's eyes, reflecting
the innocence that we didn't know bloomed within us,
'till after it withered away, the shrieks of laughter
when we clambered up from the Snow,
and gazed down at the magic creations we made, a
pair of twin Snow angels, flapping their wings,
frozen in flight,
returning day after day to see if they were still there,
our shadows hovering over them,
lengthening across the Snow,
as day curled into dusk, painting the wings of the
angels, blue,
leaving them alone to sleep in their bed of Snow,
returning the next day to find their wings trampled
by boot prints that we blamed on the boys,
our joy replaced by sadness and madness that the
angels were destroyed,
but soon we made fresh ones out of feathers of
Snow, in our secret spot beneath the branches
of a willow,
so the boys wouldn't find them, but somebody
found them anyway, adding another angel to the pair,
so then there were three, flapping their wings in the
Snow beneath the willow,
the memory coursing through me, as veins of blue
shadow crisscross Snow, deepening the silence,
Outside and within,
as I peer down at the Snow angel a stranger made
for another to find, its wings, frozen in flight,
like the memory of two girls, giggling in the Snow,
their faces glowing from the pure gladness
of being Alive,
making Snow angels, side by side, not knowing back
then, that the friendship would wither like their
innocence, years later,
two strangers passing one another, huddled against
the cold, no longer young, not yet old,
their Souls, ageless, as they hesitate and turn back
around at the same time,
a flicker of recognition in both pairs of eyes, as one of
the strangers begins to walk towards the other, and the
other turns to go,
the space between them lengthening like their shadows bruising Snow.

Sylvie Kalenda

Elves around the County

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Holiday artwork by students at Stuart Baker Elementary School

Mme Gruppe's Grade 2 class. Pastel and paint perspectives.

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This year has been an eventful transition year for the Burden family, they are very appreciative of all the support that the community has given them. Thank you all!

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Recalculating ...

TERESA JORDAN
Community Living Contemplations

I READ a great passage this week about living your life in a way similar to your GPS prompts. When you make a wrong turn, go past the street, stop for a break, or just choose a different road the GPS simply recalculates.

There is no prerecorded message about the mistake or questions as to why the set route was adjusted or criticism of your ability to follow directions. Just a quick change in plan, an alternate route, a different turn.

The idea was that we sometimes spend so much time berating ourselves when we lose our way or make a mistake. Sometimes we get a little hesitant and fearful not wanting to repeat a mistake or get further embroiled in something that is somewhere we did not intend to go.

The GPS would teach us that without judgement or analysis a different route, goal, expectation or journey can be plotted. Without being overly judgmental or emotional, we can simply look at what options are now before us to reach the destination and line up those. To simply recalculate also means that we admit that we made the wrong turn or different route and that it is not working or no longer getting us to where we want to be.

We need to get clear on the destination, refine the goal, see clearly where we want to be headed and map it out. There are a lot of streets and routes, and countless options that can get us to our destination.

Holiday artwork by students at Stuart Baker Elementary School

Mme Gruppe's Grade 2 class. Pastel and paint perspectives.

Unique Christmas traditions around the world

Christmas celebrations span the globe. According to a 2025 report from the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, there are roughly 2.6 billion Christians worldwide, a figure that undoubtedly contributes to the popularity of Christmas. Christianity continues to have the most adherents of any religion in the world, and the Christian population is expected to top three billion before 2050.

Christians bring unique cultural touches to their Christmas celebrations each year. Celebrations vary widely, and here's a look at some notable Christmas traditions across the globe.

Yule Goat

The Yule Goat is a Christmas tradition in Sweden. The goat is believed to be an invisible spirit that ensures that Yule preparations are done correctly. A popular theory connects the goat to the Norse god Thor, who rode a chariot pulled by two goats.

Krampus

While many people celebrate the benevolence of Santa Claus, some celebrate a much grumpier alter-ego of sort. Krampus is a man-goat, half-demon monster who punishes misbehaving children at Christmastime, says Britannica. He is the evil companion of St. Nicholas, and is believed to have originated in Germany. His name comes from the German word "krampen," which means, "claw."

Christmas chicken

Christmas Eve is a popular romantic occasion for couples and families in Japan. In addition to gift-giving and a romance, many people choose to feast on a meal of KFC fried chicken and strawberry shortcake for dessert.

Roller-skating to Mass

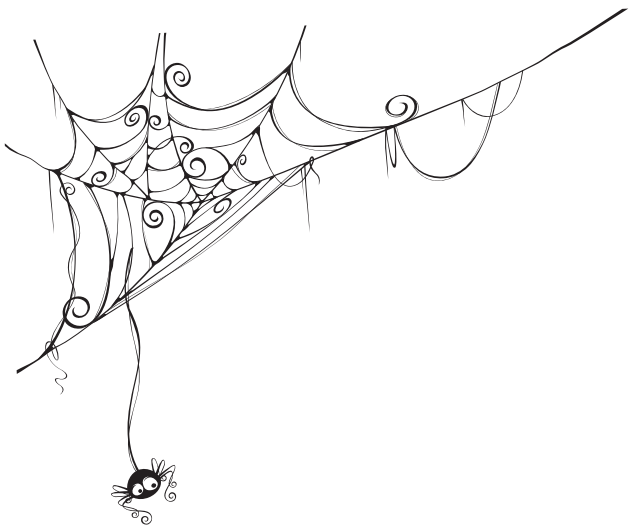
In the city of Caracas, Venezuela, it's customary for Christmas Eve celebrants to roller skate to early morning Mass. Known as ÒMisa de Aguinaldo,Ó these special church services take place on the days leading up to Christmas, with the most festive held on December 24. On this day, the streets of Caracas are closed to automobiles, enabling revelers to cheerfully skate to church.

Mummering

In Newfoundland, Canada, celebrants known as mummers dress in elaborate disguises featuring mismatched clothing and whimsical accessories. The mummers obscure their identities and visit neighbors' homes during the 12 Days of Christmas, performing songs, skits or dances while others attempt to guess their identities.

Las Posadas

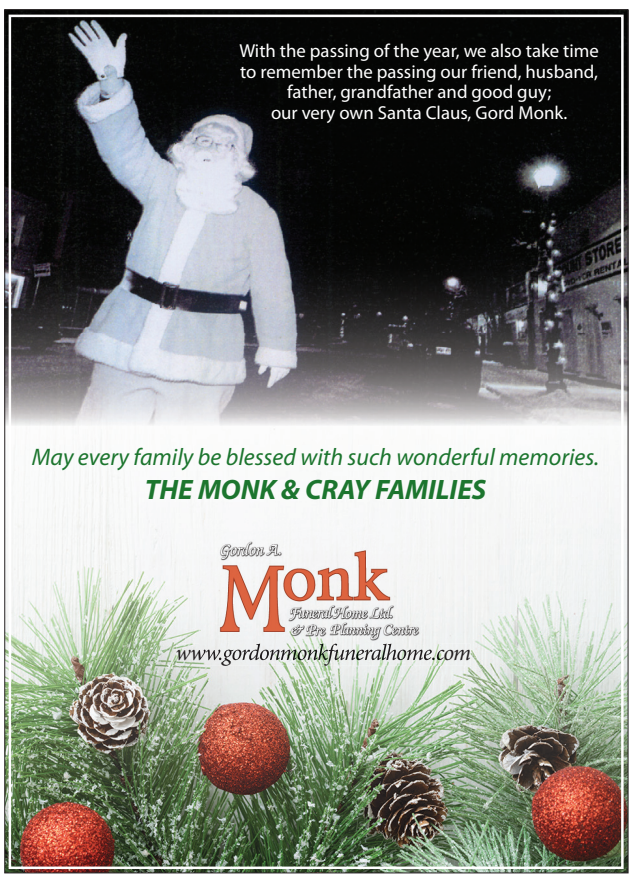
In some Hispanic regions, including Mexico, participants reenact Mary and Joseph's search for shelter in Bethlehem through vibrant processions. They travel from house to house, singing traditional songs and requesting shelter only to be turned away until they reach a final home or church that will symbolically welcome them in.



Spiderweb decorations

Individuals in Ukraine decorate their Christmas trees with artificial spider webs. This tradition is inspired by a tale of a poor widow and her children who didn't have money for tree ornaments. Upon waking up on Christmas morning, they found their tree covered in sparkling, glimmering spider webs that resembled tinsel. A spider had spun the beautiful display as thanks for finding shelter and warmth in the family's humble abode. Today's spider webs symbolize unexpected blessings and gratitude.

Plenty of unique touches set Christmastime celebrations apart across the globe.


With the passing of the year, we also take time to remember the passing our friend, husband, father, grandfather and good guy; our very own Santa Claus, Gord Monk.
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HOLIDAY GOODIES COOKBOOK
County Life Cookbook
The following recipes are family favourites from our staff members. From our family to yours, we wish you a happy (and tasty!) holiday season.

Blueberry Lemon Scones

By Emily Stonehouse
This is a recipe I perfected with my kids during the pandemic, and we have made regularly ever since. It reminds me of a time where our pace was slower, our actions more deliberate.
We often (accidentally) add dog hair or hot pink glitter. Though I would not recommend straying too far from the recipe.

Enjoy!

2 cups of flour
1/2 cup of sugar
2 1/2 tsp of baking powder
pinch of salt
1/2 cup of butter (works best if frozen then shredded in a grater)

In same bowl as dry ingredients, gently knead together:
1 egg
1/2 cup of oat milk
3/4 cup of blueberries (I just use frozen ones)
1 tsp of lemon zest

Take out of the bowl and gently knead some more on a floured surface.
Shape into a disc and slice into 6-8 pieces.
Chill these in the fridge for AT LEAST 15 min.
Put in oven at 400 for 18 minutes.

Peanut Butter Balls

By Laura Smith
I have included the original in my mother's (Lilly Chisolm) handwriting. It was a family favourite that still carries on for over 70 years.

2 Tbsp butter
1/2 cup crunchy peanut butter
1 1/4 cup icing sugar
Mix thoroughly
Roll into small balls and chill
Melt 3 semi-sweet chocolate squares and 1 Tbsp of paraffin wax
Dip balls in chocolate, then roll in peanuts, walnuts or coconut.

Dave's Nuts and Bolts

By Thomas Smith
This recipe is made by my father-in-law every year. Throughout my fiancee's childhood, Nuts and Bolts were always on the table around Christmas. If you are lucky, you get to take home your own bag!

Ingredients:
4 cups of unsalted butter
1 tbsp seasoning salt
3 tbsp worcester sauce
3 tbsp garlic powder
1 tbsp smoked paprika
¼ tsp onion salt
4 cups Shreddies
4 cups Chex
4 cups Cheerios
4 cups pretzel sticks
4 cups of Goldfish trio mix
1 bag of Bugles
1 box Cheese Nibs
1 box Cheese Stix
4 cups of salted peanuts

Directions:
1. Preheat the oven to 250F.
2. In a large roasting pan, combine the cereals, nuts, crackers, and pretzels. Melt butter and mix spices and Worcestershire sauce. Pour over the dry ingredients and mix thoroughly.
3. Bake at 250F for 1.5 to 2 hours, stirring gently every 25 minutes.
4. The mix will be done when all of the butter mixture has been absorbed and is dry.
5. Enjoy!

Butterhorns

By Tim Yano
My Grandmother Verna McCarthy, who just passed at 92, had a recipe for Butterhorns. A delicious pastry, little rolled up triangles with nuts. She would make these at Christmas and Easter, and we always would go crazy. She was a Halls Lake cottager more than 30 years ago, before they sold their cottage.

3 cups flour
¾ cup Butter
2 egg yolks
9 oz Sour cream

1 ¼ cup sugar
1 ½ tsp cinnamon
1 ¼ cup chopped pecans

2 egg whites beaten

Mix flour, butter, yolks, and sour cream well. Shape into ball, cover with flour, wrap in wax paper. Refrigerate overnight.

Take out 1 hour before use.

Divide into 3 pieces.

Roll each piece thin, brush egg white on pieces.

Sprinkle 1/3 of nut mixture on each piece. Cut into Triangles. Roll up, starting at the wide end of the triangle.

Place on a greased cookie sheet. Bake at 350 f for 20 min. Remove immediately.

Easy Croissant Breakfast Casserole

By Jennifer McEathrom
Looking for a simple yet scrumptious make-ahead breakfast or brunch option? This Easy Croissant Breakfast Casserole is an excellent option. It's an update on the classic 'Christmas Morning Wife Saver' made with crispy butter croissants, smoky bacon, and soft soufflé-like eggs. Serve with fruits or breakfast meat like bacon or sausage links.
Prep Time:10 minutes
Cook Time: 45 minutes
Total Time: 55 minutes
Ingredients
6 Croissants
8 slices cooked Bacon; finely chopped or cooked ground breakfast sausage
8 Eggs
1 tsp Parsley
1 tsp Onion Powder
1 Tbsp Chives; chopped
1 tsp Garlic Powder
1/2 tsp Salt (optional)
1/2 tsp freshly ground Black Pepper
2 ¾ cups Milk
1 cup heavy Cream
1 cup old cheddar; shredded (divided)
1 cup smoked Gouda; shredded (divided) or mozzarella
Instructions
Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F, line a baking sheet with parchment paper, and grease a 9 x 13 inch baking dish with butter.
Slice each croissant into four pieces and place on the parchment lined baking sheet.
Toast the croissants in the preheated oven for 5 minutes, or until they are dried but not extra golden.
Reduce oven heat to 350 degrees F.
Arrange the toasted croissant quarters in the prepared baking dish. Scatter the chopped bacon over the croissants.
Whisk the eggs, parsley, onion powder, garlic powder, dry chives, salt, pepper, milk, and cream together in a large mixing bowl. Add ¾ cup of the old cheddar cheese and ¾ cup of smoked Gouda/mozzarella. Mix well.
Pour egg mixture over the croissants and bacon. Use a spatula to press down gently on the crescents to soak them with the egg mixture.
Sprinkle the remaining cheese over the surface of the casserole.*
Bake in the preheated oven for 40-45 minutes or until it is nice and golden. Serve immediately.

Holiday artwork by students at Stuart Baker Elementary School

A toque display by Mme Ward's class using watercolour and mixed media. /submitted

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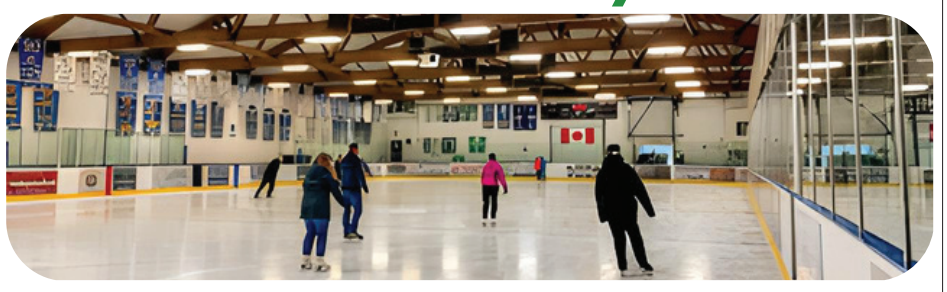

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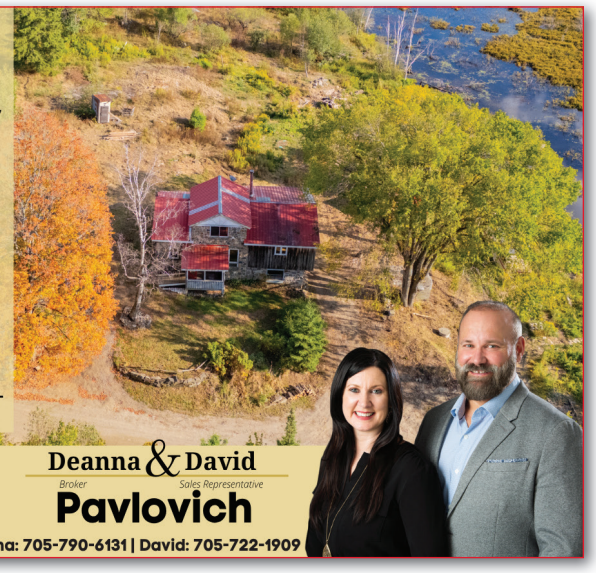

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Writing on the Senior Side

Merry Christmas to the wise generation

GAIL STELTER
County Life Contributor

Did your children have G.I.Joe toys? Do you remember the marketing saying for this toy? "… knowing is half the battle." Knowledge is power, and knowledge plus experience is wisdom. We are old. We know a lot, and we have experienced a lot. We are the wise generation. (Our younger generations do not always accept this, but we know it to be true.) And, we can continue to add to our wisdom.

Historically, scientists believed that the brain stopped growing after childhood. Current research shows that "the brain can continue growing and changing throughout the lifespan, refining its architecture or shifting functions to different regions of the brain. The importance of neuroplasticity can't be overstated: It means that it is possible to change dysfunctional patterns of thinking and behaving and to develop new mindsets, new memories, new skills, and new abilities." This is according to *psychologytoday.com.*

As members of the wise generation, we are called to choose happiness. You and I can have a Merry Christmas. We may have to work at it, but I believe we can all do this. We know Christmas can be stressful for many seniors. We have senior circumstances that promote our stress:

Limited mobility: Health conditions can make decorating, shopping, or attending events difficult.

Loneliness and depression: Social isolation rises during the winter months. Holiday gatherings may also highlight the absence of loved ones.

Memories of the past: Nostalgia can be comforting, but it can also magnify grief or loss.

Financial concerns: Gift-giving expectations may create stress for seniors on fixed incomes.

Living situation: Seniors who live alone or in care facilities may feel disconnected during family-centred holidays.

If any of these rings true for you, then remember that knowing your pitfall is half the battle, and this knowledge can assist you in planning activities and setting yourself up for success. While there are some happenings beyond our control, there are others we can tilt in our favour. There is a little saying that a colleague and friend once put on my desk. It has guided me in my career and in life: If it is to be, it is up to me. Just a few little two-letter words that remind you to put yourself in the centre of your life and empty the power of combining little things to make a huge difference.

So, what can we do to help ourselves have a Merry Christmas or to help other seniors do the same? Here are a few suggestions you may wish to consider:

Storytelling and reminiscing in a comforting way. Everyone enjoys thinking of happy Christmases past. Create an opportunity for everyone to do this when you come together at Christmas. Perhaps everyone can tell of a favourite gift or Christmas food. You could go around the room and ask each person to tell their favourite Christmas carol, and then everyone can join in the singing. How about recalling each person's favourite Christmas movie, identifying a decoration that brings back a special memory, or asking each person to recount stories about Santa? Storytelling and reminiscing are important for seniors and can bring much joy to your whole family. I hope you will have a story time of Christmas memories.

Invite a friend for afternoon tea or go out for lunch together. Plan to do something with one or more of the people you like or would like to get to know better.

Set a budget that works for you. This can be difficult. We like to buy gifts for the people we love. We've done it our whole lives, and we don't want to stop.

Do at least one at-home Christmas activity you have always enjoyed. Perhaps you are a baker, or you love to make crafts and decorations. Read your favourite Christmas storybook or watch the original Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*. I always like watching *Christmas Vacation* and *A Christmas Story*.

Take charge as best you can. Ultimately, each one of us is responsible for our own happiness. Yes, sad and even bad things will happen. It is how we manage and go forward that will make it feel somewhat better. Get that neuroplasticity going and think good thoughts.

Don't worry, choose happiness because if it is to be, it is up to me.

Merry Christmas to the wise generation!

Goodbye 2025 and Hello 2026

A Look at My "New" (Three-year-old) Writing Life

Dear readers, since this will be my last story before the new year, I would like to share my thoughts and progress on being a seventy-six-year-old writer. It was three years ago, in November, that I submitted my pitch to the publisher and editor of *The Haliburton County Echo* for a once-in-a-while story under the banner I created called *Writing on the Senior Side*, and I am so thankful for their immediate and wonderful support, which included a request for stories every other week.

see page 17

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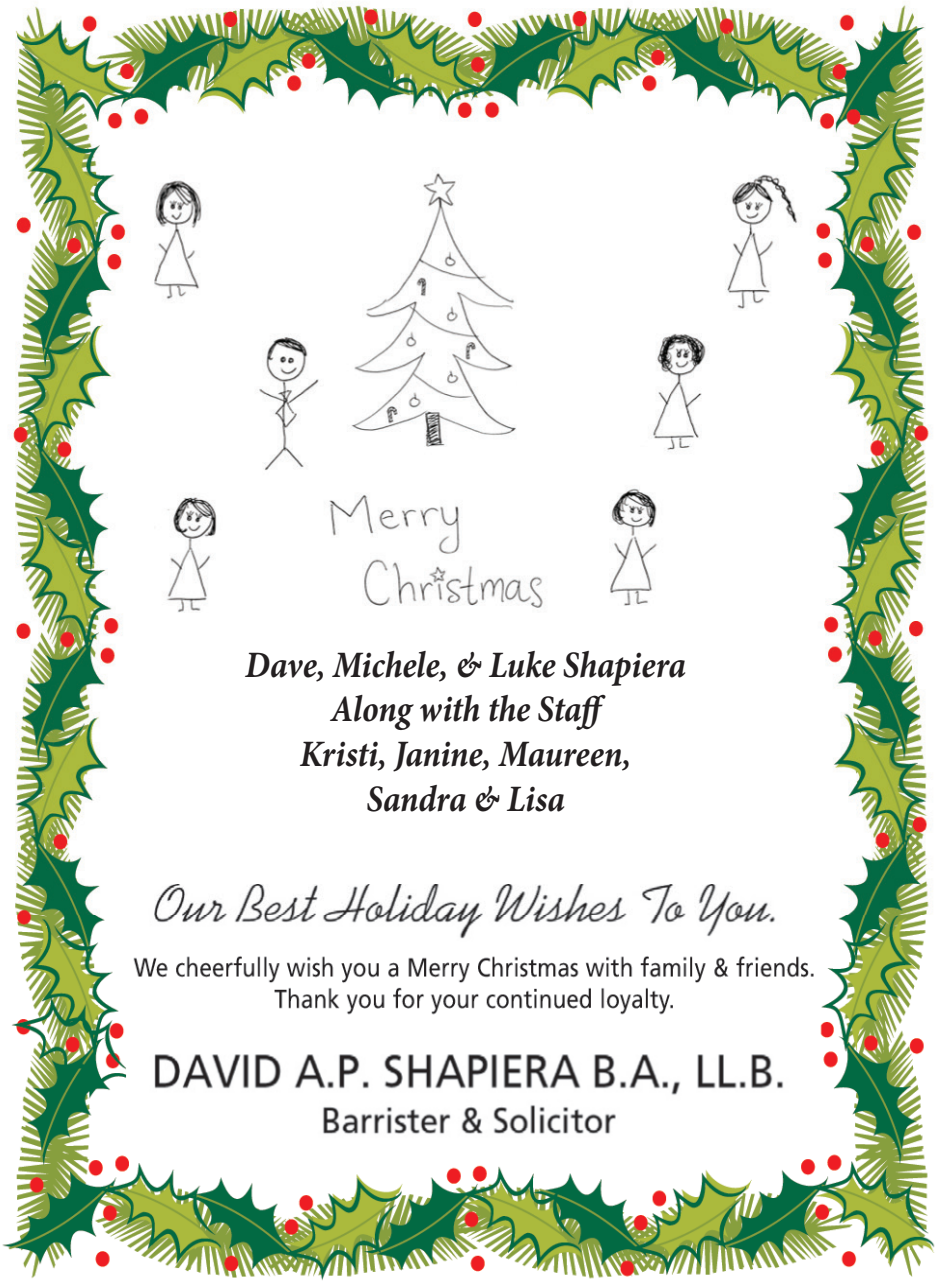

Dave, Michele, & Luke Shapiera
Along with the Staff
Kristi, Janine, Maureen,
Sandra & Lisa

Our Best Holiday Wishes To You.

We cheerfully wish you a Merry Christmas with family & friends.
Thank you for your continued loyalty.

DAVID A.P. SHAPIERA B.A., LL.B.
Barrister & Solicitor

from page 16

Wow, how exciting and so much fun. It was also the catalyst to do more, and I started writing short stories, submitting them to online and print literary magazines. I started taking writing courses, completing a Certificate in Writing from U of T, and now my first book is in the final steps. I had a mini celebration when I signed it off, told the design team what I wanted on the front cover and wrote the information for the back cover. I am hopeful my book, *21 Smithfield Drive*, will be a fait accompli by February 2026. All this has unfolded after my start here in *County Life*.

In the meantime, here are my goals and plans for 2026. (Hurray for neuroplasticity!)

I have started (10,000 words so far) a new endeavour, a cozy mystery novel.

I continue to write new short stories and submit them accordingly.

I will be reading some of my stories on the Story Circle on Canoe FM.

I am going to book a table at the Art Council's Haliburton Highlands Bookapalooza 2026.

I will continue to write my writer's blog, called Gates Open, on my website mgailstelter.ca.

I will continue to keep my website current. Thank you to my web designer and good friend, Linda.

I want to plan a fun book launch where, in addition to reading from my book, all who attend can tell one of their favourite childhood or family stories. I like the idea of a Sunday afternoon Wine and Cheese, but not sure about the expense; we'll see…maybe tea and cookies:)

With respect to *Writing on the Senior Side*, I want to get back to more of the humorous side of living our senior lives and combine this with telling our senior memories and childhood stories. I hope you will continue to read and enjoy them.

Happy New Year!

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Nature in your backyard

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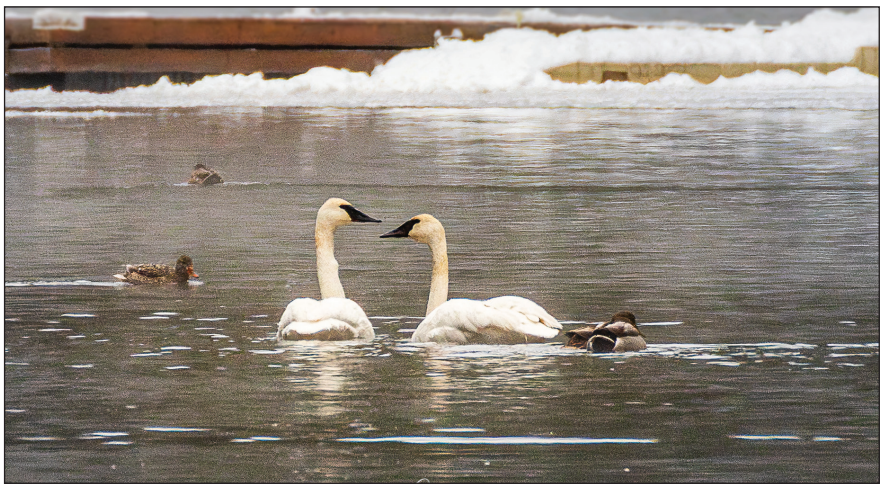
A cute couple by Debi Ireland

Pine Marten poking through by Tammy Nash



Swan duo by Debi Ireland

A proud Blue Jay by Jill Moulton

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A hungry squirrel by Jill Moulton

Barred owl by Tammy Nash

Orion constellation by Steve Smithson

Cute Mink by Tammy Nash

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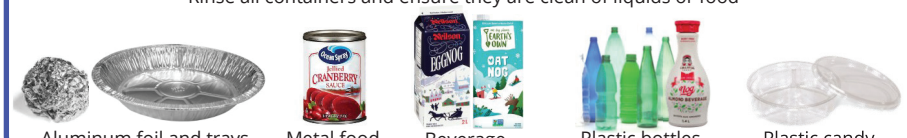

Aluminum foil and trays | Metal food cans | Beverage cartons | Plastic bottles (caps can be left on) | Plastic candy, fruit, veggie trays

Recycling for Papers

Paper gift wrap | Paper gift tags | Paper gift bags (remove string) | Christmas cards & envelopes | Cardboard rolls | Cardboard boxes (flatten)

Garbage

Metallic or foil wrapping paper | Ribbons, bows, tape | Styrofoam shipping block | Bubble wrap | Broken ornaments | Plastic toy packaging (hard-to-cut material)

Dysart Landfill Holiday Hours

Wednesday, December 24, 2025 (Christmas Eve)
8 AM to 12:30 PM: Haliburton
Closed: Harcourt, Kennisis Lake, West Bay, West Guilford

Thursday, December 25, 2025 (Christmas Day)
Closed: All Dysart Landfills

Friday, December 26, 2025 (Boxing Day)
10 AM to 5 PM: Haliburton, West Guilford
12 noon to 5 PM: Harcourt, Kennisis Lake, West Bay

Wednesday, December 31, 2025 (New Year's Eve)
8 AM to 12:30 PM: Haliburton
Closed: Harcourt, Kennisis Lake, West Bay, West Guilford

Thursday, January 1, 2026 (New Year's Day)
Closed: All Dysart Landfills

Friday, January 2, 2026
8 AM to 5 PM: Haliburton, West Guilford
Closed: Harcourt, Kennisis Lake, West Bay

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Merry Christmas from
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Tune in this December for holiday programming, cheerful tunes, festive community spirit and Radio Bingo on December 30th!

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Christmas stories

A holiday classic, *The Nutcracker* hit the stage at the Northern Lights Performing Arts Pavilion the first weekend of December. With dancers and instructors from Skyline Dance Studio, the annual event was magical and memorable for the hundreds who came to watch the shows. /TIM YANO staff photographer

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kids' corner

What's the Difference?

Find the four differences between the two pictures.

A

B

Answers: 1. Cake on plate 2. Missing candy cane 3. Missing design on inside of cup 4. Computer screen is lit up

CANADA MONTH HISTORY

1957

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Spanish: Cinta
Italian: Nastro
French: Ruban
German: Band

Did You KNOW?

Festive decorations are commonly featured in homes and stores throughout the holiday season.

Get the PICTURE?

Can you guess what the bigger picture is?

Answer: Nutcracker

Merry Christmas

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Legion Events

Branch 441 Kinmount

Monday: Bid Euchre 1 p.m.
Tuesday: Closed
Wednesday: Mixed Darts, 7:30 p.m.
Thursday: Closed
Friday: Bingo- Doors open at 5 p.m., play at 6:45 p.m.
Supper specials every Friday starting at 5 p.m. May purchase special and eat in club room downstairs.
Clubroom opens at 4 p.m.
Saturday: Clubroom opens at 3 p.m. Meat draw 5:30 p.m.
Special events:
3rd Thursday of the month 7 p.m. executive meeting and 7:30 p.m. general meeting (members only)
3rd Sunday of the month Ladies Auxiliary Meeting (members only)
Hall rentals available at reasonable prices. Call 705-488-3462 or 705-928-7105. We welcome everyone to our events and we look forward to seeing you!

Branch 129 Haliburton

Mondays: Bridge 1 p.m. Schofield Rm. Youth darts 6:30 to 8 p.m. Clubroom 10 to 18 years of age. All are welcome, no experience necessary
Tuesdays: League darts 7 p.m.
Wednesdays: Bid Euchre 1 p.m. start – Main Hall. Bingo doors open at 6 p.m. Bingo 7 p.m. FirstWed of each month with jackpot. Follow Facebook.com/Branch129 Bingo for the most up-to-date information
Thursdays: General Meeting third Thursday of the month, 6:30 p.m. All members urged to attend.
Ladies Auxiliary last Thursday of the month at 1 p.m.
Fridays: Five meat draw, five prizes each draw, first draw 4:30 p.m., last draw 6:30 p.m. Tickets $2 per draw. Paul Sisson, MC. Friday fun darts from 4:30 p.m. and onwards. 50/50 Draw 5:40 p.m.
Whether you're planning a function for 10 or 200, call Cheryl Waller at 905-447-7741, email haliburtonlegionrentals@gmail.com or visit haliburtonlegion.com. Everyone is welcome! Club room hours: Mon. 3 to 6 p.m., Tues. 3 to 9 p.m., Wed/Thurs. 3 to 6 p.m. Fri. 3 to 7 p.m.

Branch 636 Minden

Lunch - Monday to Friday
Monday: Rug Hookers every second week. Bid Euchre 1 to 3 p.m.
Tuesday: Food 5 p.m. Canoe FM Bingo 6 p.m.
Thursday: Cribbage 1 to 3 p.m., Darts 7 to 9 p.m. and Euchre 7 to 9 p.m.
Every other Friday: Karaoke 8 to 11 p.m.
Friday Fish & Chips, Wings. Lunch 11a.m. to 2 p.m. and Dinner 4 to 7 p.m.
Saturday All Day Breakfast 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. with three Meat draws at 11 a.m.
Call ahead any day for take-out: 705-286-4541.
Schedules are subject to change without notice.
Check our Facebook page Minden Legion Branch 636 for more info.

Branch 624 Wilberforce

Hours - Sunday: Special Events Only, Monday: 7 to 10 p.m., Tuesday: Closed, Wednesday: 2 to 10 p.m., Thursday: 2 to 6 p.m., Friday: 2 to 11 p.m., Saturday: 2 to 9 p.m.
Monday:
Dec. 22, 29 Darts $5/player 7 p.m.
Wednesday:
Dec. 17 Darts $5/player 2 p.m.
Quick Supper Menu changes weekly $10. 5 to 6:30 p.m.
Open Cribbage 6:30 p.m. – No need to pre-register
Friday:
Dec. 19 Wings and Jam Session $15/lb, 5 to 8 p.m.
Dec.12 Community Care 55+ Lunch $17, noon
Saturday:
Dec. 20 Meat Draw 3 p.m.
Dec. 20 Nacho Average Trivia 7 p.m. $5/Player
Call the Legion for more info 705-448-222

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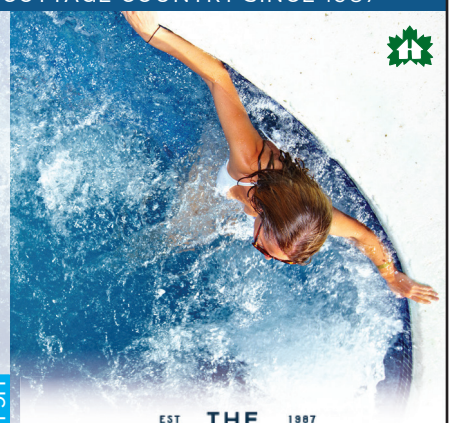

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WANTED

Wanted: scrap cars and trucks. Cash paid. Please call **705-286-3758** or **cell 249-332-1212**

FOR RENT

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Newly renovated 2-unit house on 9.5 scenic acres near Haliburton. LOWER: 1-bed, 1-bath. Features open-concept living, new appliances, in-unit laundry and outdoor living spaces. 10 minutes from Haliburton & perfect for peaceful living. Contact: info@aboveboardcarpentry.com **705-455-2196**

Cozy Older Home for Rent 2+ bedrooms. Large kitchen, large Livingroom, Dining room, sunroom and Full unfinished basement. $2000+ oil and wood heat, and Hydro. **Contact 647-768-7722**

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Bancroft - 2 bedroom walkout close to town $2,800 all inclusive New Build Contact **613-334-0357** for more information Available immediately.

Bancroft -Two bedroom walkout unit $2,500 All inclusive. Contact **613-334-0357** for more information Available immediately.

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Meeting Space for Rent: Blue Sky Studio at Haliburton Chiropractic. Bright open space downtown with private entrance and washroom. Available for rent by the hour, half or full day. Contact: **705-457-3500** info@haliburtonchiropractic.com

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Community Events

Send your event listing to classifieds@haliburtonpress.com

Genealogy for Seniors
When: Thursday, December 18 from 12-1pm at the Highland Grove Library, or 2pm at the Cardiff Library
Curious about where you come from? Join us for an inspiring introduction to family history research led by Adele Espina of the Haliburton Highlands Genealogy Group, with support provided by the Government of Ontario. This workshop will walk you through the steps of building your family tree—from locating historical records to organizing your research and uncovering meaningful stories from your past.

Holiday Storytime
When: Friday, December 19 at 10:30am
Where: Minden Hills or Dysart Library
Celebrate the magic of the season. Enjoy festive stories, cheerful songs, and plenty of winter wonder. After storytime, children can stay to create a simple seasonal craft to take home. Perfect for young children and families.

Tech Help Walk-in Clinic
When: Friday, December 19 from 12:30-2:30pm
Where: Stanhope Library
Stuck on a tech problem? First come, first served. Each person gets a 30-minute session with library staff to tackle one specific technology challenge. One session per person per day.

Needle Felt Hands-on Workshop
When: Friday, December 19 from 1-2pm
Where: Dorset Library
Join us for a fun, hands-on workshop where you'll learn how to needle felt a mini snowperson. These soft snow friends make perfect decorations, gifts, or keepsakes. Registration required. Call 705-457-2241 or email programs@haliburtonlibrary.ca to register. All materials provided with support provided by the Government of Ontario.

Winter Solstice Drop-in Crafts
When: Saturday, December 20 from 10am-1pm
Where: Wilberforce, Stanhope, Dysart, and Minden Hills Libraries
Enjoy simple, family-friendly activities inspired by the magic of the season and make your own tealight luminary to brighten winter nights—available while supplies last. No registration required.

Christmas Pageant - "The First Christmas"
When: Sunday, December 21st at 10:30am
Where: West Guildford Baptist Church

Christmas Eve Service
When: Wednesday, December 24th at 7pm
Where: West Guildford Baptist Church

Kwanzaa Storytime Party
When: Saturday, December 27 from 10:30-11:30am
Where: Minden Hills Library
Enjoy stories, songs, and crafts that honour the seven principles of Kwanzaa—like creativity, and working together. Families will learn about the meaning of this celebration through storytelling, music, and hands-on fun. No registration required.

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Home Game

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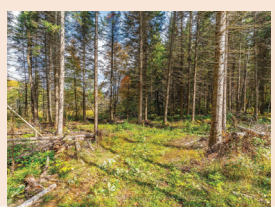

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

THIS WEEK
ASES goes wild!
Annual magazine assembly at Minden school has everyone laughing... pg 3

THIS WEEK
LANDS FOR LIFE
Participants share their views on Crown land policy... pg 6

FEATURE
A Big Kid
Jack Thistle says being a Big Brother is a good excuse to have fun... page 25

THE HALIBURTON COUNTY
ECHO
The Voice of the Highlands since 1884
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1997 Vol. 115, No. 44 • 36 PAGES 90 cents (incl. GST)

Downloading costs may not be as bad as once feared

by PETER DOWNS
Staff Reporter

That rattling at your window panes isn't from the winter winds.

It's from the collective sigh of relief municipal officials are letting out now that the provincial government has lightened the financial load of services it will transfer to them in the new year.

"It looks a lot more optimistic for taxpayers than it did a month ago," said Dysart Reeve and County Warden Murray Fearrey. "... I'm much more optimistic than I was that we can stabilize taxes."

On Friday Finance Minister Ernie Eves released the province's figures for the costs downloading responsibility for some services to municipalities, such as welfare, policing social housing and child care, in return for assuming most of the costs of education.

Based on preliminary numbers released in the fall, county politicians and administrators had been bracing themselves for a huge financial hit.

They anticipated the need to hike taxes by up to 25 per cent in some cases to pay for the millions of dollars in new services they were being given.

But municipalities should be able to avoid those drastic increases with the help of provincial financial assistance outlined by Eves last week.

While the exact figures haven't yet been worked out, it appears the government will give the county and the 10 municipalities "several millions of dollars" in funding next year to help handle their new responsibilities, said Les Shepherd, the county's chief administrative officer.

However, the government is expecting municipalities to chip in with some assistance, as well.

To make the swap of services revenue neutral, as pledged by the province from the beginning, municipalities are being ordered to cut $565-million from their budgets next year.

Locally, each municipal council will have to reduce their overall spending by 1.7 per cent.

Provided they make the

See COUNCILS page 24

A PERFECT ANGEL: Aliccia McEachern was one of the performers in Sunday night's delightful Christmas Concert by Lakeside Baptist Church. We'll have more photos from the evening in next week's Christmas Greetings supplement. Next week The Echo comes out a day early, on Monday, Dec. 22.

The toll roads will ring only for the Lions Club

by PETER DOWNS
Staff Reporter

Dysart council has lowered the gate on fundraiser toll booths for all but one group on the municipality's roads.

The Haliburton Lions Club, the first community group to organize the tolls in Dysart, has been granted exclusive rights to continue the fundraising activity annually on one day over the civic holiday weekend in August.

PRICE: 84 cents plus GST = 90 cents

Spurred by the success the Lions enjoyed, a growing number of associations and groups applied to the municipality to hold the tolls during summer long weekends.

Last August the Haliburton Minor Hockey Association beat the Lions to the civic holiday weekend and raised about $3,000 at a volunteer toll set up on Highway 118, just below town.

The Lions held a similar toll for the Labour Day weekend.

The Haliburton County Search and Rescue association also applied to hold a toll. But when it learned council was considering putting a ban on the prac-

See LIONS page 21

DOUG HODGSON
His commitment to education in Haliburton County means he leaves an enduring legacy

by MARTHA PERKINS
Editor

Haliburton County's unofficial "minister of education" left an enduring legacy, both during his 15 years as the county's first director of education, and in the 13 years since his retirement in 1984.

If children today are benefitting from a high quality of education, then the foundation for such success rests in large part with J. Douglas Hodgson, who died at Haliburton Hospital on December 11. It was his commitment to ensuring that the children of Haliburton County received an education equal to that of children in larger centres which made his stamp on local education so strong and abiding.

"I wanted kids here to have a better education than I had had," he said in a conversation with The Echo in September, just a few days before the Haliburton school which was re-named in his honour celebrated its 25th anniversary. "I wanted them to have the same opportunities as

See HODGSONS page 4

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